



**United States Department of Agriculture, Food Nutrition
Service (USDA-FNS)**
**Clarification on FFY 2015 SNAP-Ed Guidance, Template 2,
Section B, #2c Food and Activity Environments**

The description for this section should describe activities and findings from a local needs assessment of the food and activity environments. This could be a needs assessment using a consistent and reliable process, survey, or tool. Or, it can be information that is gleaned through interactions with program partners or participants.

Examples:

- Extension educators have found through client interactions that the primary store where people in our community use their SNAP EBT cards has limited variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, many of which are not stocked properly. Upon visiting the store, educators observed that variety was limited, and that the vegetables were ones that our target audience are not familiar with or know how to cook. The produce is also located behind six refrigeration units, mainly stocked with beverages with added sugars, and covered in signage that promotes sugary drinks. We will continue to assess what options may be to improve the stocking and marketing of fresh produce in the store in 2015.
- During FFY 2014, SNAP-Ed staff conducted an assessment of three restaurants located in our primary census tract. We used the Nutrition Education Measures Surveys – Restaurant (NEMS-R) to conduct an assessment of the dining facility, menu options, and signage. Two of the restaurants have low scores of 21 and 22. This warrants further investigation as to the root causes. We recognize that some clients may not be aware of the fact that their restaurants serve unhealthy options, yet they continue to eat there because there are no other affordable dining options with ready-to-eat meals in the census tract.
- Many of our clients have expressed interest in using their SNAP EBT at farmers markets, however there continue to be reported barriers, some of which are actual; others may be perceived. We surveyed 100 low-income mothers, and the results indicate that 65% do not find markets convenient due to the day and time they are open, that transportation is limited, or that shoppers are uncomfortable using the tokens provided by the market, as this draws attention to their use of public assistance benefits. We will be contacting local market managers this year to identify ways to improve access to and awareness of market hours and ways to improve the shopping experience.
- During FFY 2015, our staff will be doing a photographic assessment of the sidewalks and walking trails located in the vicinity of the schools where SNAP-Ed services are provided. We will be recruiting and training six high school students with an interest in photography and health to map out the community and identify areas that are not safe for pedestrian. The focus will include: litter, cracks in sidewalks, ambience, smell, and

lighting. We are going to present the photographs to the school wellness committee and the neighborhood Safe Routes to Schools program to identify strategies for making it easier for low-income residents to walk to and from school and work.

- Our educational curriculum has a component on teaching participants how to make a healthy meal in a skillet. Yet, many of our clients live in one-room housing facilities where they are unable to use a skillet in their own rooms due to fire codes. As a result, clients continue to eat ready-to-eat meals. During FFY 2015, we plan to work with the property manager to identify how we can create access to alternative kitchen facilities for clients so that they can purchase ingredients to cook from scratch.
- Our county is home to two USDA-recognized food deserts. One of the primary challenges is that in our frontier area, the closest full-service grocery store is located over 22 miles away. To get there, it generally takes about an hour due to the nature of our road infrastructure. There is a bus system, but it is challenging for SNAP-Ed participants to carry bags of groceries. We will be developing a partnership with a private food retailer who is willing to sponsor a shuttle bus on Saturday for our participants to visit the grocery store, and receive nutrition tips from a trained educator on the drive to and from the store and while circulating the store aisles.